

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12 IO-12

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R 111140 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1556

INFO USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 8363

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS PINT VS

SUBJECT: SITREP FOR MAY 11, 1973

FOLLOWING RECEIVED FROM AMCONSUL CAN THO BEING REPEATED

QUOTE

CAN THO 0303 H

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, PINT, VS

SUBJECT: SITREP FOR MAY 11, 1973

1. SUMMARY: THE VC INTERRUPTED TWO BUDDHIST CEREMONIES IN BAC LIEU TO IMPRESS THE LOCAL ETHNIC CAMBODIANS. THE RATION OF CASUALTIES IN KIEN GIANG TURNS AGAINST THE GVN. THE VC IS PRESSING A " RETURN TO VILLAGE" PROGRAM WITH LIMITED SUCCESS IN VINH BINH. END SUMMARY.

2. SECURITY SITUATION:

(A) MR IV REPORTED 50 INCIDENTS ON MAY 10, ABOUT THE SAME AS THE PREVIOUS DAY. THESE INCLUDED THREE GROUND ASSAULTS, 29 ABF'S, 14 HARASSMENTS, AND FOUR ACTS OF TERRORISM AND SABOTAGE. CHUONG THIEN PROVINCE REPORTED 13 INCIDENTS AND DINH TUONG NINE. ARVN DID NOT MAKE AVAILABLE THE
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DAILY CASUALTY FIGURES.

(B). KIEN GIANG PROVINCE REPORTED A DECLINE IN CASUALTIES FOR BOTH SIDES IN APRIL, BUT WITH GOVERNMENT LOSSES EXCEEDING THOSE OF THE ENEMY. RVNAF LOSSES WERE 34 KILLED, 77 WOUNDED, 2 MISSING, AND 205 DESERTERS. ONLY 18 VC/NVA WERE REPORTED KILLED AND ONE CAPTURED. COMPARATIVE FIGURES FOR MARCH WERE 41 RVNAF DEAD, 122 WOUNDED, AND 56 VC/NVA DEAD AND SEVEN CAPTURED. THE GOVERNMENT REPORTED 108 ENEMY- INITIATED INCIDENTS IN APRIL, OF WHICH NEARLY HALF TOOK PLACE IN KIEN BINH DISTRICT. SPIRITED FIGHTING ALSO OCCURRED IN KIEN THANH DISTRICT, WHERE RF TROOPS FROM NEIGHBORING AN GIANG PROVINCE HAVE BEEN LARGE SUCCESSFUL IN CLEARING OUT A VC INFESTED AREA AROUND HON SOC MOUNTAIN.

(C) THE UNFAVORABLE RATIO OF CASUALTIES IN KIEN GIANG IS PROBABLY A RESULT OF THE TACTICS ADOPTED BY BOTH SIDES SINCE THE CEASEFIRE. THE VC/NVA ARE CONCENTRATING UPON ATTACKS BY FIRE AND HARASSMENTS, WHILE GOVERNMENT FORCES ARE MAINTAINING A RATHER STATIC DEFENSIVE POSTURE, WITH REDUCED PATROLLING AND RESTRICTIONS UPON AIR AND ARTILLERY SUPPORT. THESE TACTICS CONFORM TO A DELTA- SIDE PATTERN (CAN THO A-65).

3. VC ACTIVITY: (A) TWO RECENT INCIDENTS IN VINH CHAU DISTRICT, BAC LIEU PROVINCE, ILLUSTRATE VC EFFORTS TO IMPRESS THE LARGELY CAMBODIAN POPULACE AND DEMONSTRATE VC ACCESS TO THE PEOPLE IN GN AREAS. ON THE NIGHT OF APRIL 19, AN ARMED BAND OF VC, PROBABLY FROM THE VC SOC TRANG MOBILE BATTALION, INTERRUPTED THE ANNUAL BUDDHIST "BLESSING CEREMONY" AT THE ADJACENT KANDEL AND WATCH PICH PAGODAS NEAR VINH CHAU DISTRICT TOWN. BLOCKING ALL ESCAPE ROUTES, THE VC HARANGUED THE ASSEMBLED VILLAGERS, HALF- HEARTEDLY TRIED TO COLLECT TAXES, AND STOLE SOME PERSONAL BELONGINGS FROM NEARBY HOUSES. AFTER THE MONKS REFUSED TO LET THE VC ENTER THE PAGODAS WHERE THE LOCAL GVN OFFICIALS, MOSTLY ETHNIC CAMBODIANS, HAD TAKEN REFUGE, THE VC HUNG THEIR FLAG ON A TREE AND LEFT. ON THE NIGHT OF APRIL 26, A GROUP OF 20 VC INTRUDED UPON A SIMILAR CEREMONY IN THAM CHU HAMLET. AFTER 15 MINUTES OF MINGLING WITH THE LARGELY APPREHENSIVE POPULACE, THE VC DEPARTED. THE BAC LIEU DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVE SAYS THAT GVN OFFICIALS DID NOT REPORT THESE INCIDENTS TO HIGHER AUTHORITIES.

(B) THE VC HAVE VIGOROUSLY PRESSED THEIR "RETURN TO VILLAGE" PROGRAM IN VINH BINH SINCE THE CEASEFIRE BUT APPARENTLY WITH MARGINAL SUCCESS. LIMITED NUMBERS OF VILLAGERS ARE RESPONDING

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TO APPEALS TO RETURN TO VC CONTROLLED AREAS, ESPECIALLY IN THE CANG LONG BASE AREA IN NORTHERN VINH BINH. THE VC PROGRAM IS DIFFICULT TO ASSESS. EVEN AT THE WAR'S PEAK THERE WERE NO LARGE SCALE ARVN OR US MILITARY OPERATIONS IN VINH BINH. THE FIGHTING CREATED FEW REAL REFUGEES AND THERE ARE ONLY TWO REFUGEE HAMLETS. TO ESCAPTE THE VIOLENCE SOME FAMILIES MOVED OUT OF THE LARGER SETTLEMENTS INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE, COMMUTING

TO THEIR FIELDS IF NECESSARY. THE VC MAY NOW BE TRYING TO EN-
TICE THESE FAMILIES TO REGROUP INTO LARGER SETTLEMENTS, WHERE
THE VC CAN BETTER EXERCISE POLITICAL CONTROL. WITH THE VIOLENCE
DECLINING IN VINH BINH, THIS APPEAL IS NOT UNATTRACTIVE, BUT
THUS FAR RELATIVELY FEW VILLAGERS APPEAR TO HAVE ANSWERED THE CALL.
WISNER UNQUOTE
WHITEHOUSE

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